



When Lorbey (@placeholder4abn) declared June Egbert Real on August 25th, 2019, and, none of us could have imagined the impact it would have on the Homestuck fandom. Hussie's reply- "you were the first to find my treasure, and so it will be done"- effectively canonized her, and has sparked a resurgence of the fandom and a flood of June Egbert art, fic, and meta theory. This zine celebrates June Egbert. It features many artists and writers, many of whom spearheaded the effort to bring June into the spotlight. We hope JuneZine inspires you to do the same. Thank you for the support! Happy 4/13.

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vivinaturetime

PROMO ARTIST

pesterquests

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hairscare
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leafingaround
MercilessNaps
notedchampagne
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PrincePeachu

remypost
salinesalts
snake8ytes
schiachperchten
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whichoftime
worstgirleva
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June: See A Friend:

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Fantasystuck:

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En Medias nellcromancer

June Egbert sits on a bench in the park. It's a balmy summer day, and the noonday breeze plays idly around the Goddess of Breath, blowing gentle waves across the too-green grass nearby. It's a nearly cloudless day, which feels almost like a joke to June. Inside she feels like a storm is raging in her chest, a hurricane ripping through her soul. She tries to quell the storm inside her with a few deep breaths. In and out. In and out. In and out. She tries to ignore the source of her anxiety—the knee length skirt, the makeup—the whole fact that she is, for the first time, presenting as a woman in public. She is entirely too aware that her mascara is too heavy, her eyeliner uneven, and she can't help but worry that she looks stupid. Even with an outfit handpicked by Kanaya, even with Roxy's "makeup pro strats", even with all of the reassurance from Jade, she just can't help herself.

Her attempts at distracting herself from the discomfiting realization that she is a physical being taking up physical space in this world is working better than she had hoped, her focus mostly captivated by other people milling about the park. She watches silently at the young humans and trolls playing on the swingset at the far end of the park, flinging themselves from the monkey bars with the reckless optimism that only youth can afford and crashing to the ground, tumbling head over heels into the mulched ground. They leap back up, laughing a whooping, barely aware of the scrapes and stains that coat their hands and knees as they race off again to repeat the whole process.

Several adults—parents presumably—monitor the hollering children, barely paying attention as they gossip back and forth about nothing in particular. The handsome carapacian one of their hairdressers is dating, a mutual friend's infidelity, tittering over a common crush, the briefest mention of politics. It's not that June wants to eavesdrop on them, the breeze is just eager, carrying their voices over to June, in hopes that it might please her. She's just glad that they, at least, haven't noticed her yet. Others, of course had. They were trying not to stare, or at least not to be too obvious about it, but it's not every day one of the gods of the new world just decided to hang around at your local park—and it's especially noteworthy when one of those gods appears to be crossdressing. June grimaces at the thought. She's not... crossdressing. She's an actual girl, dammit.

ROSE: You look stressed out.

Tangible relief floods through the adrenaline shocked veins of the goddess of breath as she tilts her head up toward the familiar voice. Rose Lalonde drifts down from the sky to land in front of her, a bemused smirk belying the gentle concern that shone in her eyes plays across her face. She touches down in front of June, her golden orange skirt fluttering in the breeze.

JUNE: you came!

ROSE: Would there be a reason for me not to?

JUNE: no i just...

JUNE: i know i don't pass uh,

JUNE: at all...

ROSE: And you thought that would be enough for me to not want to spend time with you?

JUNE: i...

ROSE: June, there's basically nothing you could do, say, or wear that would keep me from spending time with you.

JUNE: thanks, rose.

ROSE: You're very welcome.

She smiles warmly, her eyes scanning up and down June's body.

ROSE: You look miserable though. Do you want to get going? Maybe find somewhere with less people?

JUNE: god, yes.

JUNE: get me out of here, this was a mistake.

June all but leaps to her feet, and hastens in the direction of the nearest exit. Rose stifles a laugh, and follows June as she half-walks-half-runs towards the exit of the park.

JUNE: honestly i should've taken you up on your offer to meet up at my place.

JUNE: i thought getting to the park on my own would be like...

JUNE: proving to myself that i'm doing this, you know?

JUNE: and i guess i was hoping that with a bunch of other people being there would somehow make me less notable?

ROSE: It's okay! I genuinely think you're very brave for doing that all on your own.

ROSE: A little stubborn, but still brave.

JUNE: hah. yeah.

JUNE: uh, do you know where we're going? i didn't really plan this through.

ROSE: There's a lunch spot I quite enjoy that's not too far from here.

JUNE: lunch spot?

ROSE: I can't very well call it a thai restaurant because Thailand doesn't exist anymore.

ROSE: Even if that is more or less what southern Human Kingdom food tastes like.

JUNE: oh huh. i never really thought about that.

JUNE: pizza is still called pizza here so that was really all i needed.

ROSE: You're aversion to culinary diversity baffles me.
JUNE: rose, pizza is the perfect food.
ROSE: Mhm.
JUNE: it can be literally anything.
JUNE: want it to be spicy? pizza can do that!
JUNE: how about sweet? pizza can do that too?
ROSE: Sweet pizza?
JUNE: yeah, like a dessert pizza!
ROSE: That sounds just atrocious.
JUNE: aw, where's your appreciation for culinary diversity?
ROSE: Far, far away from the unholy matrimony of savory italian food and confectionary delights.
JUNE: i'll have to make one for you sometime.
ROSE: June, you're my dear friend and I care about you deeply, but I resolutely and adamantly refuse to ever eat any of your cooking.
JUNE: :/

It was easier with Rose around, being in public. She'd barely noticed the crowds of people around her as they walked down the city street. She took a moment to take in her surroundings. The crowd around them moved out of their way as they walked, giving the two gods a wide berth. With Rose there, she could pretend that the crowd wasn't staring at her, at her outfit, at her makeup.

She could feel the panic start to well up in her chest again. Looking at all the people around, gawking as she passes by...

Rose elbows June gently in the ribs, breaking her from her panic.

ROSE: Hey, are you alright?

It's rare for Rose Lalonde to betray true sincerity, but the tone in her voice is a dead give away. She looks up at June, her brow furrowed in concern, the corner of her lips tugging downward, even as she offers up the ghost of a reassuring smile.

June tries to relax, to tell her friend that she's fine. But she can't find the words. She turns her face downwards as she walks, trying to coax her voice back into cooperating. It doesn't, so she just shakes her head slightly. Rose nods softly in acknowledgment before suddenly floating upward. She hangs in the air a foot above June's head, and the crowd around them gasps in awe, seeming to take a step back, as if to better take in the miracle before them. A few phones come out; snapping pictures of the hovering goddess, and for a moment, it feels, to June, that she's been forgotten.

ROSE: Come on, let's go.

JUNE: where?

ROSE: Somewhere with the verticality to dissuade obnoxious onlookers, from sticking their noses into the business of the divine.

June follows behind Rose, almost reluctantly, as she soars up, up into the clouds.

The two find themselves sitting on the roof of the tallest skyscraper in the city. The wind around them rustles, and below them cars and pedestrians swarm their way down the busy streets below, looking so much like ants swarming around a dropped cracker.

June takes a deep breath, staring down at the busy street below, trying to calm her raging thoughts.

ROSE: It's a beautiful day today.

JUNE: hah. yeah. i guess it is. i haven't really been able to focus on it though.

ROSE: A shame. If you bothered to leave that head of yours for a moment you'd see some truly beautiful clouds. Including the odd one or two that don't happen to look like a cake or pipe.

JUNE: yeah. sorry rose, i didn't mean to ruin your day out.

ROSE: June, please look at me.

June tilts her head to the side, glancing at Rose out of the corner of her new glasses. Rose gives her a soft smile.

ROSE: You aren't ruining anything.

June just sighs.

JUNE: yeah i...

JUNE: i feel like i am.

ROSE: Do you want to talk about it?

JUNE: i.

JUNE: you're not going to judge me or anything?

ROSE: I swear I will employ no tricks, no freudian psychoanalysis, and certainly no half-baked wikipedia philosophy, from now until the end of the day.

Rose places a hand over her heart as she announces her guarantee, with a mocking gravity to her voice. June cracks a hint of a smile in return.

JUNE: alright.

JUNE: i guess...

JUNE: i guess it's a bunch of little things.

JUNE: or maybe it's a bunch of really really big things?

JUNE: i mean.

JUNE: everybody staring at me is really, really uncomfortable!

JUNE: it makes me even more aware of how much i don't fit in.

JUNE: it makes me feel like i'm making a mistake.

JUNE: maybe i shouldn't be transitioning.

JUNE: maybe it's just easier for everyone if i just...

JUNE: stay a guy?

ROSE: Would that make you happy though?

JUNE: uh...

JUNE: probably not?

JUNE: i just hate looking like this.

JUNE: i'm all... boxy.

JUNE: i just look wrong.

ROSE: I think you look wonderful, June.

JUNE: i...

JUNE: you could just be saying that.

ROSE: June, I don't know how to tell you that I'm being entirely truthful when I say that I think you look lovely today.

ROSE: You're outfit is extremely cute, and the longer hair looks really wonderful on you too.

ROSE: You seem to me to be a lot happier now than you were before you decided to transition.

JUNE: i... i guess?

JUNE: i mean, i like the idea of being a girl a lot!

JUNE: but i'm not...

JUNE: i'm not a real girl.

ROSE: That's bullshit.

ROSE: June Egbert I think that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard come out of your mouth.

ROSE: You're a real girl. You just proved it with the last thing you told me.

JUNE: ...that i'm not a real girl?

ROSE: That you like the idea of being a girl, smartass.

ROSE: There are no barriers to womanhood.

ROSE: Wanting to be one is all the requirement necessary.

ROSE: Trust me on this.

JUNE: are you sure?

JUNE: i mean? what if i'm wrong?

ROSE: Then you can go back to being a man.

JUNE: oh. i uh.

JUNE: i hate that concept.

ROSE: Then you're probably not wrong.

ROSE: Honestly June, I'm not trans. I don't have all the answers to your questions, and I can only guess at how you're really feeling.

ROSE: I see you as a woman, and as someone who's finally, finally taking her life into her own hands after seeming content to just let her life slip by, and it's genuinely wonderful to watch.

ROSE: I want to encourage that. I like this girl I'm getting to know.

ROSE: I'd like to see a lot more of her.

June blushes deeply. The anxiety and fear and doubt in her chest wasn't gone, no—it would probably take a long time for those to abate—but something else overwhelms those feelings. She has a difficult time putting a name to them. Hope? Joy? Trust? Something like that. Whatever the name of it, it warms her chest and brings a wide smile to her lips. She looks up to the sky, the scattered clouds above the two goddesses parting, as if on suggestion, to reveal a vast, blue sky above them. Something inside her tightens, a single tear trails down her cheek.

JUNE: thanks, rose.

Her voice is strained, and she's desperately holding back tears. Ever since she started taking estrogen, about two months ago, she's noticed herself reacting more.... enthusiastically to pretty much any strong emotion. She hates to admit it but it's a lot like going through puberty, again.

ROSE: Are you alright?

JUNE: oh yeah. i'm just...

JUNE: hormonal.

Rose tries to hold back a laugh, and fails miserably, a loud nasally snort issues from pursed lips. June, mocks indignance, between soft sniffles

JUNE: don't laugh it's true!

JUNE: its these stupid hormones i'm on!

JUNE: i feel like i'm 14 again.

ROSE: That sounds... complicated.

JUNE: i mean. it's a lot better this time?

JUNE: it feels... better i think.

ROSE: That's wonderful to hear.

JUNE: yeah! i mean, i know i really only just started,

JUNE: and maybe this is just wishful thinking...

JUNE: but when i look in the mirror, sometimes...

JUNE: sometimes it doesn't hurt?

JUNE: sometimes i can see glimpses of the girl i want to be hiding underneath everything else.

ROSE: I'm really glad to hear that June.

ROSE: For what it's worth I think I see it.

ROSE: The changes, I mean.

ROSE: They're subtle right now but, just give it some time.

ROSE: You're going to be amazing.

June just laughs. The sky around them is bright blue, and here, high above everyone else, her worries seem to have evaporated. Rose's presence is safe and calming. She radiates an assurance and confidence that June wishes she could have someday. Maybe she will. She has her whole life ahead of her after all. Things are going to work out alright. That small glimmering bead of hope—no, of truth—glistens in her mind like crystalline courage. It's not that there aren't going to be hard times ahead of her. It's not that she's never going to feel dysphoric again. It's not that she's never going to suddenly have a panic attack about making some irreversible mistake. No, she knows all of those things are still going to happen, likely for a long time still. But she's certain now, more than ever, that she's going to make it in spite of all that.

She breathes in deeply, feeling the warm summer air dance inside her lungs as she holds it there, before finally releasing it. She repeats the action a few more times, each time the crushing weight of anxiety lessens its grip on her head a little more.

She turns and smiles at Rose.

JUNE: yeah.

JUNE: i think so too.

Her stomach grumbles.

JUNE: now, uh.

JUNE: how about lunch?



JUNE: but when i look in the mirror, sometimes...

JUNE: sometimes it doesn't hurt?

JUNE: sometimes i can see glimpses of the girl i want to be hiding underneath everything else.

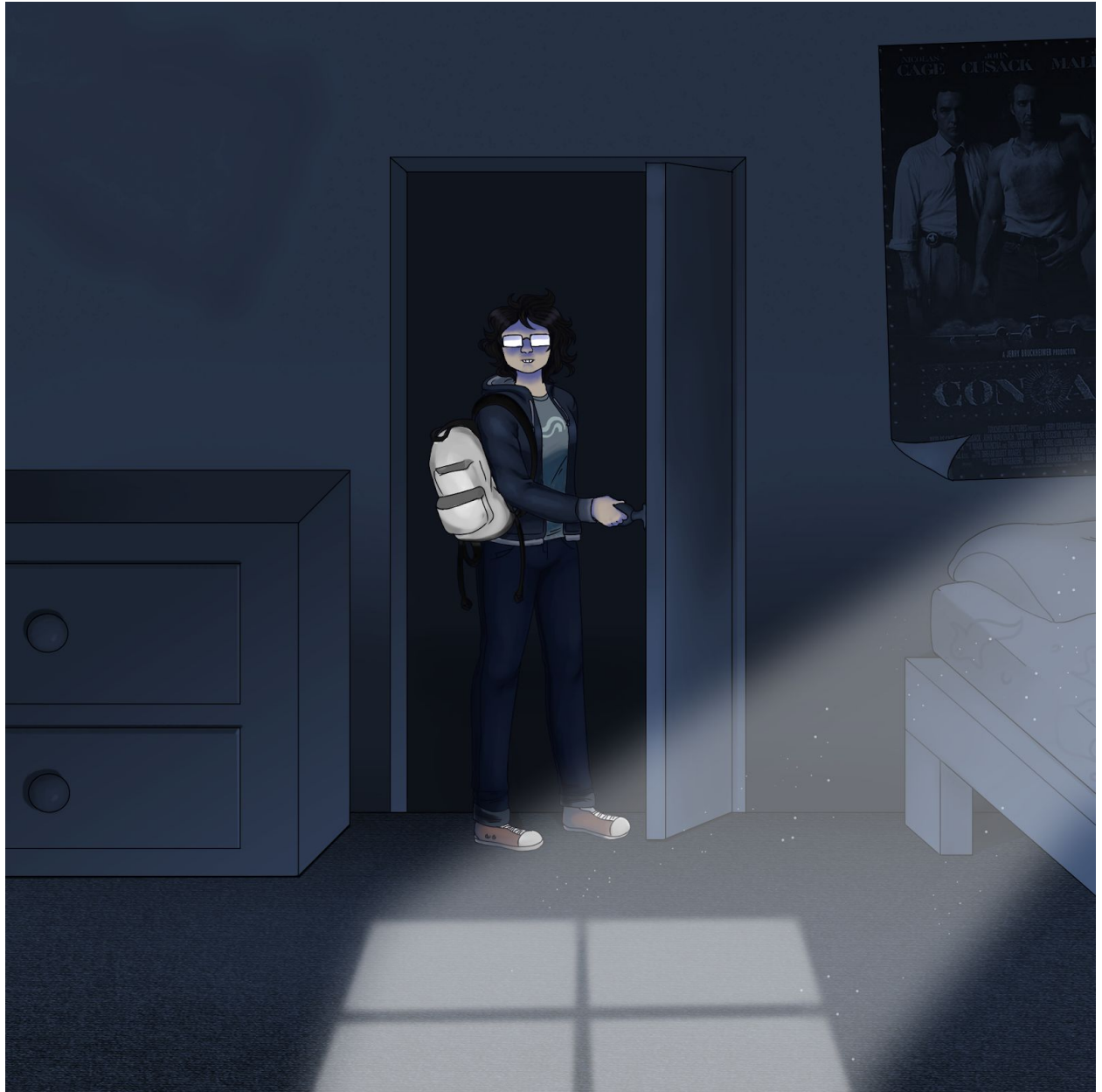
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JUNE: well i think it was a good job.

ROSE: Of course you think it was.

ROSE: Yes, we defeat the miniboss.

ROSE: But we fell down the hill and we're stuck down in this ravine now!

ROSE: With no visible way out and the night lingering close.

JUNE: well.

JUNE: i still think we did a good job.

ROSE: Haha.

JADE: hehehe

DAVE: heh

Yes, circumstances don't look good for you four.

But, you're June Egbert and being the heart of your team is something you do well.

The beast you just defeated was merely a minor challenge in a larger quest and you move forward.

A little beat up from the fight, Jade had mended her wounds with manipulation of nature by covering it with moss (gross!), which apparently was very effective. She was a mix of a druid, a hunter and a witch, like she was part of nature herself.

As a novice time bender, Dave could have rewinded these wounds, but Jade prefers to do these by herself. His bend over time is still juvenile, but it presents itself useful.

As leader Rose was not the type to refuse any advantage. A min maxing aficionado who gave equal focus on effectiveness, showmanship, protecting and guiding her friends and high level witchcraft.

Once an heiress to a kingdom you didn't wanted to inherit, your friends helped you to run away and embraced you into their adventuring group. By royal blood the breeze acts in your will and floating is a gift.

Flying away from ravine would not be hard at all, but carrying friends out would so you follow the path forward. You try to take a better look ahead by flying upwards, but you see nothing remarkable

The day drags itself and night is there. The place is dark and full of plants you're not familiar with being shined on by Rose's wand as you hunt down the Undying Serpentine, slytherin beast residing the fallen ruins of mayhem.

It's a quest like all others. You get a target, find it, kill it and grab the reward.

You and your friends have been doing this for a few months: Do a hunt get the money spend it all up and get another hunt. It's a little chaotic, but you all love it.

ROSE: This is it.

She stops your party.

ROSE: Everyone we're taking a break so we're all on top performance and take the beast as fast as we can.

DAVE: rose please stop saying top performance

DAVE: it hurts every time

ROSE: That's why I say it, of course.

DAVE: ughhhhhh

ROSE: Jade, can you find all the edible fruits and leaves so we can dine?

JADE: oh of course!

JADE: eating leaves is great and very nutritious :)

JADE: or

JADE: we can just eat our rations

ROSE: Excellent idea Jade. That's why you're in charge of our feeding and camping.

JUNE: i can take a better look of the place.

JUNE: i will just fly in and back, real fast.

ROSE: June, stay here, it will be dangerous.

ROSE: You're tired and we don't know what awaits us.

JUNE: rose, it's fine!

JUNE: everyone is doing something, i wanna do something too!

JUNE: sometimes i just feel like i'm a little useless compared to you all, but...

JUNE: haha what am i even talking about, i'm back in a second.

ROSE: June, wait!

ROSE: No!

ROSE: Ugh, she's already gone.

You're not so tired that you can't scout ahead, the one thing you do well.

Broken pillars and steel filled with moss holds a structure above the water. At this point you've seen so many ruins and things like this you don't even question their purpose or if they had one in the first place. They're ruins to be explored, what else could someone want?

Rose probably knows a lot about these, but not you. Just like you don't know that the Undying Serpine nests below the water and stealthy attacks anyone who transgresses its territory.

You're knocked out unconscious before you can realize something is wrong.

RSSS: We lfliany deecsru irhe nohj htis is such a bssielng ew nca
ilynlaf tkae imh hmeo ot hte rnehot.

DVEA: hwat ppeadneh to ihm thgohu i newk teesh ediwr nfserid eerw ont
odgo ofr hte ireh

JEAD: ookl ta wath eyth idd to imh thgiance abotu fytogrga

You can hear your friends, but you can't understand them at all, you're just way too dizzy from the knock off. You can feel one of them (you hope it's Dave) is carrying you bridal style and moving away from the slain serpent.

So they saved you? Geez that sucks, you won't hear the end of it when Rose starts scounding what a bad decision that was and how irresponsible you were.

DAEV: we hsolud mveo iqullcy bfreoe his edrafdlu finrdes tccah pu

VEAD: hte oesn atht neo waya uro heir nda trnude him iton... iths!

SREE: Asboltuely.

JDDE: ltse shtee, his ifnrds rae nto niocmpeetnt mad wlil omce tafer
us oson eonuhg.

Your friends sound so weird, damn that hit really did a number on your head. You hope Dave or Jade can heal you cause it would suck if that hit did anything to your hair.

JAED: Hte lgith iharde girl sepiclaly a is trahet.

RSEO: Teh ohtres mghit be waek, btu seh kowws wath she si diogn

REOS: Do ont udnerstemiante tehm.

You start to understand what they're saying.

You make some sounds and try to escape their grasp.

ROSE?: Oh godonses yuo're finlaly awlae.

ROSE?: We wree so wroired about yuo!

Ugh, here comes the scounding.

DAVE?: Wehre did you eevn run off to, heir?

DAVE?: And waht is up wthh yuor hiar? It's so lnog!

DAVE?: And thsee ouftits? It's so unebcoimng of you.

Oh no.

This isn't your friends at all.

NOT JADE: It's good to finally find you, heir John.

Hearing that name is almost worse than the hit you took from the serpent and you're back unconscious.

Ouch!

This is getting repetitive, but great! You're awake again and looking to your surroundings. The amount of unknown people is ever larger. Great!

ROSE?: Lveae her miemditaeyl if you vlaeu yuor lvies!

ROSE?: Oh yuo're noe of hte heir's fierdns? It aws yuor inlfuence taht mdee him itno tihs hririlbe tihng!

ROSE?: Sotp syaing teshe tihngs aubot her! She's my firned!!

Shouting. Amazing! As if your headache wasn't large enough as it was.

JADE?: SUTH TEH FCKU UP NAD LTE HER GO ONW YUO BOEFRE I AET YUO YUO
LCWOSN

Oh no now this is way too loud.

Being attacked, misgendered, and now attacked again, just.

Fuck.

Can things get worse

One of the new figures walk towards you and you realize it can get weird!

DAVE?: hloy cfuk june aer oyu ok pelase tlel me youre ok are yuo
pelase dnot be hrut

DAVE?: yuo knwo how tihs geos i wlil rewnid oyur inujry you know it
lwil hrut a bncuh btu yorue gnona efel bteter ltaer

They touch you.

But in a tender way?

You feel your headache wind back in time, like your pain feels bigger until it's gone.

Dave is there.

He healed you by rewinding your injury and he's...

Crying?

DAVE: gxd june please tell me you're ok please please please
JUNE: dave, i'm...

You feel weak, you can't properly stand up, but Dave helps you.

You see Rose and Jade are doing their best to hold back your assailants, knights who raised you back on your kingdom. Plants lash out and bursts of light clash on their armor. You usually don't see Rose being so reckless, she tells you about "conservation of energy" all the time.

But she's not doing that now.

She is throwing all she has and screaming for them to unhand you.

JUNE: i think-

JUNE: i think i'm ok now.

You hold back your tears and look to Dave and nod.

His sword in hand and your hammer in yours you strike the knights from the kingdom that once would be yours on the back.

You hoped the hit would be better, but these are professionals unlike you four.

They are trained knights, unlike you four directionless, emotional teenagers.

They regroup and take your distance from you.

You can see how tired Rose and Jade are. They have something and you are clearly in disadvantage so you listen.

KNIGHT: Heir John stop this foolishness immediately.

KNIGHT: Leave the side of these hooligans!

KNIGHT: We know you're having a rebellious phase and want to be free, but this is too much!

KNIGHT: Yes, look at yourself! This is no way for a proper gentleman to dress or act!

KNIGHT: These "friends" are terrible influence for you, heir John.

KNIGHT: Look at you and explain yourself! You need to come back to the real world already. Fantasy is over.

You step back. You have known these knights your whole life, they trained you, taught you, laughed with you. They were almost your weird uncles and aunties that were there always there for you.

But they're not there for you anymore

And now they want to take everything from you.

Your friends, yourself.

You look at them.

Jade is holding your free hand. Dave and Rose are not good with physical contact, but they do their best to you their support by touching your shoulder.

They believe in you.

And they are not leaving you.

JUNE: my name-

JUNE: IS JUNE EGBERT.

JUNE: and i'm not an heir!

JUNE: i reject all birthright royal bullshit!

JUNE: none of that matters if it means pretending to be someone else!

JUNE: i choose to be myself!

JUNE: and i choose my friends!

A gust of wind comes from you.

A refreshing breeze to your friends.

Yet a harmful blast to your enemies.

You four pose like a team cause shit just got serious.

And you scream and smile in unison as you rush forward.

Rose, who taught you everything you know about being a girl strikes with new found power as the knights can't hold back and fall back. Rose, who was possibly the first one to see who you truly were, who told you and helped you to run away towards your true self.

Dave, who has always protected you and always had your back dashes forward, cheats time and gets there before they can react, striking and dodging and bending time to your team's advantage. Dave who promised to kick the ass of any guy who disrespected you. Something he already did numerous times.

Jade, who showed you that girls can just *be* and don't have to bother with being proper or small, that they can be loud and do whatever they want. She leaps towards the enemy and slashes them with her claws as vines hold their feet to the ground and they stand no chance. Jade, who cried and laughed with you. With her, you both emotionally grew so much by together.

And you.

You cry and smile and rushes forward with your hammer to join your friends.

These knights might have raised you and tried to grow you into a proper king, but you choose to be yourself with the friends that love you and would never abandon you.

You choose to be yourself.



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June: See A Friend
sandbirde

"Junie B. Jones!"

You freeze in the doorway for a second as every head in the shop turns to see where the yell came from. He waves a frantic arm, his seat tipping backwards from the effort as his drink threatens to splash everywhere. You sigh inwardly. With a flick of your finger, the back of his chair is saved from a spine-bruising introduction to the ground. You make your way across the shop, ignoring the usual barrage of looks and whispers in favor of his Cheshire grin.

"You know I hate when you call me that."

The grin grows wider, somehow. "No, you don't."

This time, your sigh pushes outward in a show of melodrama. "Well, hello, anyways."

"Hello! How are you today, madame?"

Your mouth twists. Damn him and his irresistibly contagious smiles. "I'm okay. Better, now that I'm here."

The corners of Roxy's mouth finally relax a bit, and you feel your shoulders release with them. He tilts his head, reminiscent of a cat as always. You can almost see his ears twitching. "So, genuinely okay, or "I don't wanna talk about it" okay?"

You give up, breaking into a toothy smile. "Genuinely okay, for once. I promise."

Roxy sips his drink, squinting at you slightly. "Glad to hear it."

"How about you? Getting along okay?"

Roxy sets the cup down. His smile fades to one side of his mouth. You haven't seen that in a while. It makes everything feel lopsided.

"Yeah. Just wandering around like always. You know how it is."

You do know how it is. You still worry, but there's no point saying it. You trust him to tell you if he needs anything. He knows how it is, too.

Roxy stares at you for a few seconds, thinking. He points at the counter. "You gonna get something?"

You blink. "Oh, right. Yeah, I will." You push your chair out and stand back up. "You want anything else while I'm up there?"

Roxy gestures to the half-finished coffee. "Nah, I'm good with this."

"Okay. Be back in a minute, then."

"I'll be here." He winks, his smile returning full force. You hope a warm drink will quell the fluttering in your stomach.

You reach the counter in a breath (what else is new). Despite your speed, the cashier sneaks in a whisper to their coworker, something you don't catch. The coworker giggles behind their hand before scurrying off, and it's just you and the cashier. They smile a touch too widely, just like Roxy, but this time it does something uncomfortable to your stomach.

"Hi there, miss! What'll it be today?"

Why do staffpeople always pretend to not know who you are? Do they think it's polite? It honestly just aggravates you when they dance around your identity like it's a dirty word. You suppose you can't just say things like that, though, so you keep quiet. Right now, you're busy pondering the menu, anyways.

That is, until you see the cashier out of the corner of your eye. They're staring - no, *glaring* at you. Jeez, who shit in their breakfast?

"Sorry, can I help you?"

You wince. You didn't mean for that to come out so pissy. Still, the daggers in their eyes are weird and, as far as you know, uncalled for.

Their reply has a hint of the same venom, cascading down their sentence and dripping off the last word. "No problem here. Just admiring how beautiful you are today, *ma'am*." You bite the inside of your lower lip. Okay, better to just let this go. You don't really want to confirm that you know what's going on here. It's not worth it - not with this person, not right now.

You force a smile, not caring that it's probably obvious. "Well, thank you. I'll just take a black milk tea, please."

"Yes, *ma'am*." The cashier taps the display on the counter a few times (this society advanced technologically just a touch faster than yours, and the little differences never

cease to fascinate you). Their tone is tight and slightly squeaky with performative brightness. "Anything else?"

"No, thank you." Your tone is still more curt than you'd like. Ugh. Deep breaths, Egbert. You're done being angry. Don't let this ruin it.

"Alright, that will be 8 credits, *ma'am*."

"Tch." You literally bite your tongue, trying to keep your teeth from grinding. Their words feel like a grater to your spine. On top of that, inflation's apparently a bitch no matter what universe you're in. You count out the change and hold it out stiffly, dropping it into their open palm. You inwardly congratulate yourself on not throwing it on the counter instead.

The cashier grins again, shit-eating and all too proud. "Thank you, *ma'am*!" They exclaim it loud enough to turn heads. "Your drink will be out shortly."

You're absolutely burning, but you nod, dead silent, and move to the other end of the counter. You clench your fists, swiveling your foot impatiently. You need to get back to Roxy. You need to get away from this. You need to burst through the door screaming, leaving shards of glass and metal in your wake, flying until you can't anymore. You need *out*.

But you stand, and you wait.

"Order 412?"

You don't say anything, just walk up, grab your drink, nod again, and turn away. You're not sure if you hear them snickering behind you or blood rushing past your ears, and you don't want to dwell on it. You walk quickly back to the table, hoping your usual airy drifting will cover your speed. It still feels like time itself is fighting against you reaching your seat, but you do soon enough.

Of course, nothing slips by Roxy. The moment your butt hits the chair, he speaks.

"Okay, what happened?"

You scoot your chair in, squirming around under the pretense of getting comfortable. "Nothing. What would have happened up there? They spit in my drink and tell me to fuck off?" You try to laugh, but you can't find the air for it, and it comes out somewhere between a cough and a sigh. You sip your tea. It's bitter.

Roxy is unfazed. "Yes. That, or any number of other things to make you skitter across the floor like a rabbit running for its life."

You take another sip. Roxy frowns.

You sigh again - no complication, just a sigh - and set your drink down. "Fine, okay. It's just...ugh. They're being, like. You know." You wave your hand like the air will spell it out for you. When it doesn't, you grunt, leaning your elbows on the table.

Roxy lifts his eyebrows slightly. "No, June, I don't know. That's why I asked you. See, I thought we were having a conversation here."

"Yes, Roxy, I know how conversation works." The reply flies out before you can stop it, fast and sharp with misdirection.

Roxy's eyebrows shoot as high as they can go. He picks up his coffee and takes a long swig.

You groan, dropping your face into your hands. Damn it. Why is it so hard to control yourself lately? You really *are* acting like a threatened animal. You try again, with a tone more befitting the friend that has held your hand through all of this.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm suddenly on edge. I was fine when I came in."

"Right." Roxy set his cup back down, fiddling with the straw. "I'll forgive the shit attitude, but you know exactly why you're on edge. You've only been here for 10 minutes, June." You lay one arm on the table, tilting your head into your other hand. Yeah, you do know, but you hate letting this shit ruin your day. "It..." You sit up, laying your other arm on the table. You really don't want to talk about this, but it's Roxy. Roxy knows. Roxy understands.

You huff. "Okay. I went up to the counter, and the cashier was very nice, and they took my order correctly, and I got my drink without any problem, and then I came back and sat down. I have literally no reason to be upset."

"June." Roxy's tone has no patience for your self-flagellation. "What did they say to you?"

"Well, it's...stupid."

"What did they say?"

Okay, there's no squirming your way out of this. You chew your lip for a moment, resolving yourself, then open your mouth.

"They were whispering to each other before I got up there, whispering and laughing. I didn't hear what they said, but the cashier was like...glaring at me? For no reason? And when I asked them why, they said they were just admiring how beautiful I was, which was really fucking weird. And they kept calling me ma'am after every sentence, but in this super passive aggressive way, and I just still don't know what the fuck I did to deserve all of that or what the fuck they're laughing at but it was just so fucking *mean* and I - "

Your voice cracks, and the pause it gives you causes you to realize how loud you'd suddenly gotten. A handful of heads turn away quickly as they see you looking. The staff behind the counter don't seem to have noticed, or maybe they're just pretending, or maybe they just don't care. All you know is that you are so, so tired of being angry over people that will never give you the dignity of acknowledging it.

Your hands move to your face, squishing your cheeks in frustration before sliding upward into your hair. You lean your forehead into your palms, willing the tears away from your eyes.

Roxy sets his chin on his hand. "You know who you're talking to, here, right?"

You cough-laugh, lifting your head. "Yeah. Yeah, I know."

Roxy smiles. "It's ridiculous how intrusive people are. You do something they don't like or don't understand, and suddenly they think they need to run your life for you. Like it's any of their fucking business." He laughs darkly, looking down at the table as he rubs his fingers over it mindlessly. "Like we're ever going to wake up one day like, "Wow, it turns out I'm cis after all! You were completely justified in being unspeakably awful to me this entire time! I've seen the light!""

"Right?!" You blush. You're yelling again. You grow quiet for a moment, pursing your lips, still fighting your watery eyes. Your next words are soft enough that Roxy has to lean in to hear them.

"I just want one day, yknow? Just one day. I just want to...be. Just exist. I used to know how to do that, but now...now everything's different. I'm different. It's so complicated just to be alive, to walk and talk." You pause to collect your thoughts, then speak a little louder, a little more slowly.

"It's like I'm on a tightrope, and it's millions of miles up, so the air is too thin to breathe. It's almost unbearable, but if I faint or fall off, I'll die. And everyone else is down on the ground,

with bridges and roads, and they can't understand why I'm making things so difficult for myself, why I can't just live the same way they do. They don't understand that despite everything, up there is the only place that I can be myself. They don't understand that if I stay on the ground, I - " You stare at the table, your mind spinning with vertigo. Suddenly you can't speak above a whisper. "I might as well be dead anyways."

Roxy is silent for a moment. Then, he sighs, tapping his fingers in front of him as if they'll spell out the answers in Morse code. After a minute, he seems to find the words he wants without his fingers' assistance. Still, he speaks delicately, wrapping his words in blankets before setting them softly on the table.

"You would never be better off dead. Not for yourself, not for anyone else. Not for any reason at all." He reaches across the table, grasping your hands softly and rubbing his fingers over yours. "That being said, this isn't something to be fixed or changed or settled, somehow. It's not something that other people, even other trans people, can give you the magic secret to living with.

"It's just...something. A fact. An undeniable fact. You can't hide it. You can't make it easier or less important. You can't ignore it until it goes away. And even when you think you're doing everything right, even when you're dressing and talking and acting like it's okay, like you're not afraid, you love yourself, you know who you are...it's still there. It's always gonna be there. Sometimes you can live with it. Sometimes you can't get out of bed." He smiles wryly. "And sometimes you're not even thinking about it until some dumbass points it out."

His smile fades again, and he pauses, a pit stop while you finish processing what he's said. His words feel like worry stones in your gut - heavy, out of place, but...smooth, and oddly comforting. He's right. He can't make everything better, but he *gets it*, and that means more than you can articulate. He takes a deep breath, grabbing your attention back.

"Sorry, I know it sounds kinda hopeless like that, but it's not. I promise you, it's, like, the total opposite. You know how they say the truth will set you free? It won't happen overnight, but...this isn't something you can ever really regret. You might think you do sometimes, but you don't. It's just a big, scary change, and nobody likes being in the middle of that, even if it's for the best."

He squeezes your hands, then lets them go in favor of striking a pose.

"And, of course, you have me! I don't mind being Roxy Lalonde, resident gender expert." He scratches his chin. "Although, despite the physical differences, I still think Kanaya would be better equipped to help you with the trans-girl-specific stuff."

You sigh. He isn't wrong, but...

He takes the hint before you even finish thinking it. "Hey, you don't have to do anything you're not ready for. You know that. It's okay." He smiles reassuringly, and you feel the warmth in your chest. "I don't mind if you need to keep leaning on me for a while. It's a lot to deal with when you first start out." He then shoots finger guns and a wink at you. "I got you!" He proclaims it loud and proud, and it makes you giggle. You're surprised by how feminine your laugh sounds, and the warmth in your chest grows.

He grins triumphantly. "There ya go! That's what I like to hear!"

Something inside you breaks loose, rattling around and tickling her insides, and she busts out into full laughter. Roxy quickly follows suit, leaning back, chest shaking, the whole works. The shop patrons are definitely all staring at you now, but what do you care? You're June fucking Egbert. Nobody can tell you you're wrong for that.

They can, however, tell you off for making a ruckus in a coffee shop, and an employee rushes over to do just that - not the one that has it out for you for existing. No, that one just hangs back at the counter and leers as their coworker politely asks you to leave.

Roxy catches his breath first, but his smile splits his face unnervingly as he turns to the worker. It's funny how the same expression that exudes happiness to you can be finely tuned to make this person quake in their boots. He speaks slightly too loudly, and the worker seems to shrink before him.

"Honey, you're never gonna see our gorgeous faces again. You think the gods of your universe don't have better places to be than some dingy little shop where the staff have no respect for anyone different from them?"

He sneers. This is a side you're not sure you've seen of him, and it even scares you a little. He continues, biting off every word as if he's eviscerating prey. "Honestly, we're extremely disappointed. This isn't the society we thought we created. I hope y'all learn better. It would be a damn shame to see the world go on this way." He shoots up, throwing his chair back and making the worker jump. He then takes your hand, pulls you out of your chair and leads you out of the shop, slamming through the door.

When you're outside, he pulls you into a tight hug. "Sorry, I hope I didn't embarrass you or talk over you or anything. I just felt like we needed to get out of there and never go back. It's not worth our time or energy. We just have to hope they figure it out." He pulls back and smiles at you.

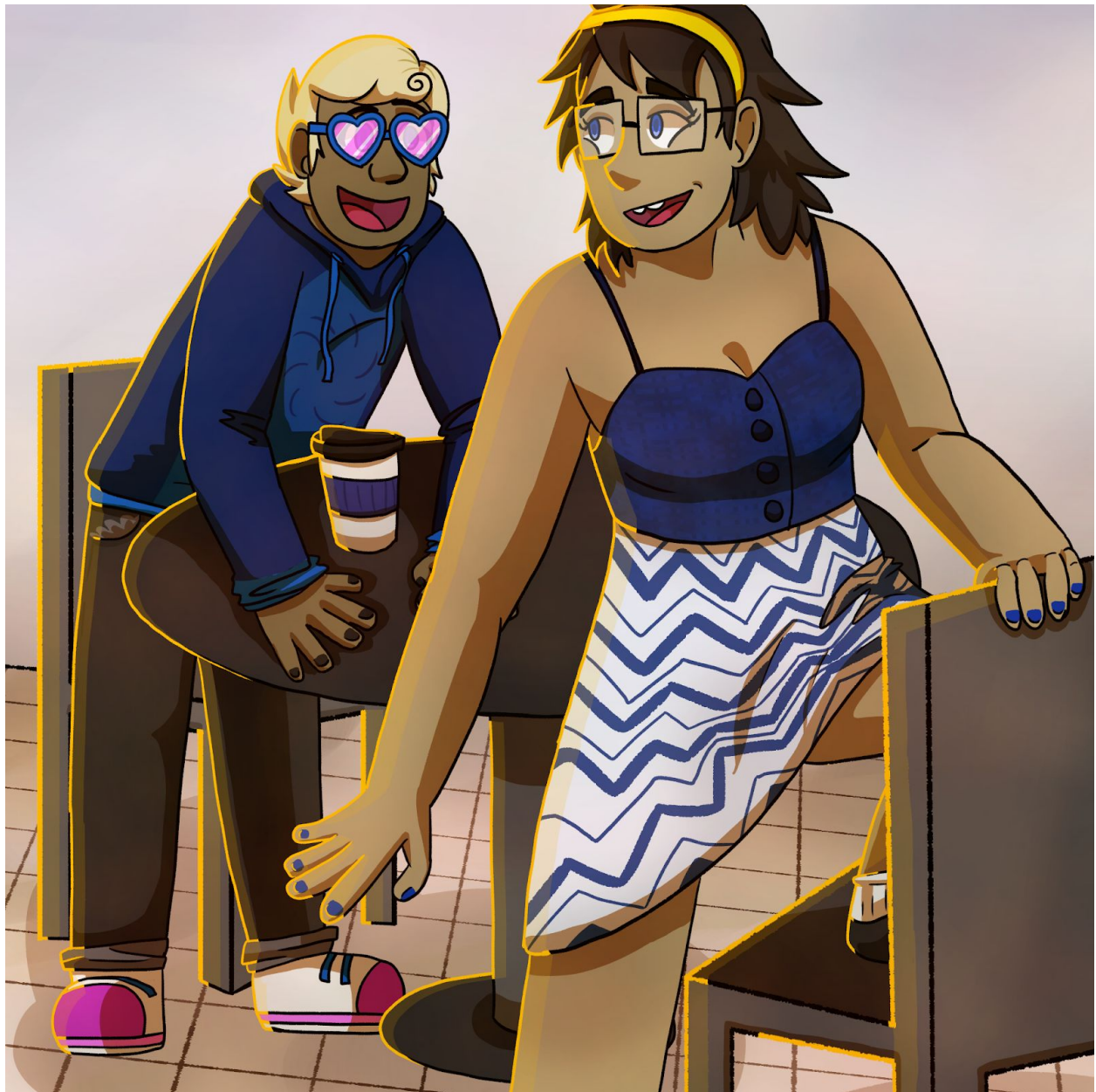
You smile back. "It's okay. You're right. It's not a good place for people like us to be in, right now. I just really -" You sigh wistfully. "I really do hope they get it eventually. Cause that sucked ass." You laugh, tinged with quiet pain, and Roxy chuckles along.

"I'm...I'm really glad to have you in my corner, Roxy."

"Aw, June." He smiles warmly at you. "That's het."

You grin, bright and wide and ready to find a better place to go. "Very."

He grins back, hooking his arm around yours, and together you set off to enjoy the rest of the day.



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About changing
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Thanks for reading!

June Egbert Real!